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TAGS: PREL PHUM PGOV PINR DJ SO FR

SUBJECT: SOMALIA/DJIBOUTI: MFA DAS PROVIDES OVERVIEW ON
MAY 7

REF: A. MAY 6 PARIS POINTS

1B. PARIS 861

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d)
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11. (C) SUMMARY: MFA DAS-equivalent Helene Le Gal on May 7 provided succinct overviews of Somalia and Djibouti. On Somalia, she said that the draft UNSC anti-piracy resolution was running into opposition and that it might be best first to adopt the UK's separate draft resolution, covering broader Somali issues, and then work for adoption of the anti-piracy resolution. France-Somalia relations had become closer as a result of successful joint action against Somali hijackers of the French vessel "Le Ponant." Nevertheless, the French are reluctant to provide the type of military assistance Somalia had requested during President Yusuf's recently concluded visit. On Djibouti, Le Gal said the GOF continued to advise Djibouti not to make an international case of Eritrea's recent border incursion into Djibouti. END SUMMARY.

SOMALIA

12. (C) We met with MFA AF DAS-equivalent Helene Le Gal on May 7 to discuss Somalia in the wake of TFG President Yusuf's visit earlier in the week (see ref A). Le Gal began by reviewing the status at the UNSC of the draft anti-piracy resolution supported by both the U.S. and France. She noted that opposition to the draft was starting to build. China, Indonesia, and South Africa had begun to express concerns, largely over what she described as "sovereignty" issues and the question of setting a precedent by allowing potentially excessively broad UN authorization to send warships into areas plagued with piracy. Le Gal believed that these concerns could be addressed but she acknowledged that adopting the resolution would likely be more complicated and time-consuming than originally believed. She noted that South Africa had been suggesting that the anti-piracy resolution be folded into the broader UK draft resolution on Somalia. Le Gal said that instead, the Security Council could adopt the UK draft first, and then adopt the anti-piracy resolution. She thought that having the UK resolution in place first might make it easier for doubters to accept the anti-piracy text.

13. (C) Le Gal acknowledged that the recent piracy incident involving the French vessel "Le Ponant" had brought Somalia and France closer together. During Yusuf's visit, both sides reiterated their appreciation of the other's cooperation during the hijacking incident. Yusuf reassured the French that Somalia had absolutely no problem with France's prosecuting the six pirates in France. Le Gal confirmed that

France had agreed to double food aid to Somalia, to 7 million euro.

¶4. (C) Le Gal confirmed as well that the GOF had refused a Somali request that French troops stationed in Djibouti be deployed to Somalia to help provide security. She said that Yusuf had made another request for French help in training Somali security forces that the French had to turn down, at least for now. Le Gal said that the French responded negatively but did not completely close the door -- "we said 'perhaps not now, let us think about it and see how things go.'" Le Gal explained that France would have to consider carefully any form of military or para-military assistance to Somalia. She said that Somalia needed to carry out security sector reform of its own. French training could not take place in Somalia, given the lack of infrastructure, functioning institutions, and overall instability. Le Gal said that France could not provide training to anything that smacked of being a "militia." Yusuf had asked that France help train Somalia's Coast Guard, but Le Gal said that the GOF had information indicating that the Coast Guard, or at least some elements of it, were in league with the region's pirates. It would be easier to work with the police, Le Gal noted. In any case, the French would sit on these requests for now but would consider changes in circumstances that would make these training possibilities more feasible.

DJIBOUTI

¶5. (C) Le Gal limited her comments on Djibouti to its dispute with Eritrea over the latter's incursion into

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Djiboutian territory. Le Gal took the same position she had on May 2 (ref B) -- that Djibouti should back off, respect the fact that Eritrea had withdrawn, and not aggressively pursue its claim of having been wronged. Djibouti had taken the case to the UNSC, AU, and Arab League. Le Gal said that in her view, the AU and Arab League responses had been perfunctory -- the AU informed both sides that they could present their cases, and the Arab League indicated it would consider sending a mission to the region. Le Gal said the Djiboutians had been phoning her "three times a day" and that her message to them was to avoid raising tensions in the region over an incident that had resolved itself peacefully. She repeated that, while Ethiopia's border dispute with Eritrea was long-standing, there appeared to be no historical basis for a border dispute between Eritrea and Djibouti, which was another reason that both sides should avoid turning this episode into a real problem.

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